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Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MONROVIA 5243

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP (TOLBERT, W.R.)
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT TOLBERT'S STATE VISIT TO U.S.

1. BEFORE LEAVING FOR GENEVA, I WISH TO SHARE WITH WASHINGTON SOME THOUGHTS ON WHAT WE SHOULD EXPECT FROM AND HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH BY THE FORTHCOMING VISIT OF PRESIDENT TOLBCERT TO THE UNITED STATES IN SEPTEMBER.

2. THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT THE GOL ATTACHES GREAT SIGNIFICANCE TO THIS VISIT AND EXPECTS TO DERIVE CONCRETE AS WELL AS INTANGIBLE BENEFITS. THIS IS BASED NOT ONLY ON THE REALIZATION THAT PRESIDENT TOLBERT WILL BE THE ONLY AFRICAN HEAD OF STATE TO VIST THE US DURING THE BICENTENNIAL YEAR, BUT ALSO BECAUSE TOP GOL OFFICIALS SINCERELY SEE A TURNAROUND IN THE US ATTITUDE TOWARD AFRICA AND, IN PARTICULAR, LIBERIA AND WISH TO USE THE VISIT AS A FURTHER SIGNAL OF THIS NEW ATTITUDE. IN THIS RESPECT THE GOL IS INTERESTED NOT ONLY IN TANGIBLES BUT IN APPEARANCES AS WELL. THE GOL WANTS RESULTS FROM THE VISIT THAT ARE NOT ONLY CONCRETE BUT THAT DEMONSTRUTE TO LIBERIANS, FELLOW AFRICANS AND TO THE WORLD IN GENERAL THAT THERE REALLY IS A "SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP." AS FOREIGN MINISTER DENNIS FRANKOY STATED IN OUR MEETING LAST WEEK, HE WANTSTO BE ABLE TO SHOW HIS CRITICS (OF THE CLOSE US-LIBERIA RELATIONSHIP) THAT THE VISIT WAS MORE THAN "ANOTHER GRANDSTAND PLAY." AS HE SAID, "WHAT DO I SAY TO THE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS WHEN THE VISIT IS OVER? WHAT DO I SAY TO MOJA (MOVEMENT FOR JUSTICE IN AFRICA)?"
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3. A GOL SHOPPING LIST IS CERTAINLY TO BE EXPECTED, AND WE ARE IN THE PROCESS OF DETERMINING EXACTLY WHAT THAT ENTAILS. THE FOREIGN MINISTER HAS MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE SEES OUR CURRENT CORE GROUP MEETINGS AS THE PLACE TO DEFINE THE PARAMETERS OF THE GOL'S REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE. THEY APPARENTLY HAVE SPECIFIC PROJECTS IN MIND, AND IF WE CAN REACH AGREEMENT ON THEM BEFOREHAND, THEY SEE THE VISIT AS THE IDEAL TIME TO MAKE PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS.

4. THIS SEEMS TO ALSO BE AN IDEAL TIME TO RESTATE OUR POSITION ON THE FUTUREOF OUR ASSISTANCE RELATIONSHIP WITH LIBERIA IN THE SPIRIT OF THE SECRETARY'S PLEDGES OF COMMITMENT TO LIBERIA IN HIS MONROVIA SPEECH AND HIS RESPONSE TO PRESIDENT TOLBERT'S APRIL MEMORANDUM. SINCE THE CURRENT AID/W REVIEW OF THE FY 77-78 PIDS MAY GIVE RISE TO NEW MAJOR PROPOSALS, PARTICULARLY IN THE FIELD OF DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES, THE POSITIVE RESULTS OF THIS NEW REVIEW COULD BE USED TO AUGMENT ANNOUNCEMENTS MADE DURING AND AFTER THE PRESIDENT'S VISIT TO DEMONSTRATE THE VISIT'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS. AGAIN, APPEARANCE CAN BE AS IMPORTANT AS THE SIZE OF ACTUAL PROGRAMS, AND WE SHOULD SEEK WAYS TO DEMONSTRATE (IN THE SAME MANNER AS WE HAVE RECENTLY DEMONSTRATED OUR SUPPORT OF ZAIRE AND KENYA AND OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROBLEMS IN THE SAHEL) OUR COMMITMENT TO LIBERIA. TO AUGMENT THE AID/W PROGRAM REVIEW, AND TO IDENTIFY AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE THE SPECIFIC REQUEST THE GOL PLANS TO MAKE, I HAVE DIRECTED USAID HERE TO MEET WITH GOL PLANNING OFFICIALS TO DISCUSS SPECIFIC PROJECTS (FOR WHICH THE GOL PLANS TO MAKE ASSISTANCE REQUESTS) IN LIGHT OF THE VISIT. AS SOON AS SUCH SPECIFIC REQUESTS ARE IDENTIFIED, THEY WILL BE REPORTED TO WASHINGTON FOR CONSIDERATION.

5. ONE SPECIFIC WE MAY WISH TO CONSIDER NOW IS THE PROPOSAL TO PHASE OUT THE CULTURAL FOUNDATION AND REPLACE IT WITH A BILATERAL ARRANGEMENT FOR INVESTING THE FUNDS FROM THE MONROVIA PORT PAY-BACK IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN LIBERIA. IF THE DETAILS CAN BE WORKED OUT IN TIME, THE VISIT WOULD GIVE US THE OPPORTUNITY FOR THE USG AND THE GOL TO AGREE TO THIS ARRANGEMENT, AT EITHER PRESIDENTIAL OR MINISTERIAL LEVEL.

6. A LESS TANGIBLE BENEFIT THE GOL HOPES TO DERIVE FROM THE VISIT IS A STRENGTHENING OF PRESIDENT TOLBERT'S PRESTIGE IN AFRICA AND CONFIDENTIAL

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THE THIRD WORLD. THE POINT MOST FREQUENTLY RAISED BY THE GOL SIDE IN OUR CORE GROUP MEETINGS IS THAT THIS IS THE ONLY VISIT BY AN AFRICAN HEAD OF STATE IN THE BICENTENNIAL YEAR AND AN ELECTION YEAR. THEY ARE JUSTIFIABLY PROUD OF THIS DISTINCTION. IT IS CLEARLY IN OUR NATIONAL INTEREST TO STRENGTHEN THE ROLE A MODERATE LIKE TOLBERT CAN PLAY IN SUCH FORA AS THE OAU AND THE NAM. THE TENTATIVE SCHEDULE FOR THE VISIT WORKED OUT IN WASHINGTON CERTAINLY AIMS AT GIVING TOLBERT MAXIMUM EXPOSURE

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WHILE IN THE UNITED STATES AND UNDOUBTEDLY WILL ENHANCE HIS PUBLIC REPUTATION. IF THE SUBSTANTIVE SIDE OF THE VISIT CAN PROVE AS SUCCESSFUL, THE ROLE THAT TOLBERT AS A MODERATE CAN PLAY IN AFRICAN AND THIRD WORLD COUNCILS WILL DEFINITELY BE INCREASED.

7. THEREFORE, WE SHOULD TAKE THE OCCASION OF THE SUBSTANTIVE TALKS TOLBERT AND OTHERS OF HIS PARTY WILL HAVE WITH PRESIDENT FORD AND TOP USG OFFICIALS TO CLEARLY IDENTIFY AND FULLY BRIEF ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE TO US. WE SHOULD MAKE IT CLEAR THAT WE APPRECIATE THE SUPPORT WE HAVE RECEIVED IN THE PAST FROM THE GOL ON SUCH ISSUES, BUT NOT HESTITATE TO POINT OUT THOSE AREAS OF IMPORTANCE WHERE THAT SUPPORT HAS NOT BEEN FORTHCOMING OR WAS MINIMAL. WE CAN EMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF A STRONG MODERATE VOICE IN THIRD WORLD COUNCILS, AND INDICATE WHY WE FEEL THAT TOLBERT IS IN A GOOD POSITION NOT ONLY TO PLAY A MODERATE ROLE BUT TO TAKE THE LEAD IN DOING SO.

8. WHILE URGING TOLBERT TO BE MORE ACTIVE IN HIS MODERATE ROLE AND ASKING HIS SUPPORT ON ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE TO US, I FEEL THAT VISIT GIVES US A GOOD OPPORTUNITY ONCE AGAIN TO EXPRESS OUR APPRECIATION TO THE GOL FOR ITS COOPERATION IN AFFORDING US LOCATIONS FOR KEY FACILITIES OF IMPORTANCE TO US IN AFRICA, SUCH AS VOA, OMEGA AND OUR DIPLOMATIC COMMUNICATIONS FACILITY.

9. LASTLY, WE SHOULD DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO REINFORCE THE GOL'S GENERALLY FAVORABLE ATTITUDE TOWARD FOREIGN INVESTMENT. WE HERE HAVE BEEN CONCERNED FROM TIME TO TIME THAT LIBERIA MIGHT BE CONSIDERING MODIFICATION OF ITS "OPEN DOOR" TO INVESTMENT. THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A QUESTION THAT THE GOL WAS HIGHLY INTERESTED IN ATTRACTING NEW CAPITAL INVESTMENTS FROM ABROAD, BUT SPECIFIC INCIDENTS INVOLVING SOME FOREIGN INVESGORS HERE HAVE CLOUDED THE INVESTMENT CLIMATE, HAVE MADE THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY NERVOUS AND CONFIDENTIAL

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HAVE GIVEN THE IMPRESSION THAT IF THE "OPEN DOOR" IS NOT CLOSING, THEN AT LEAST IT SWINGS. (THE EMBASSY CAN PROVIDE MORE SPECIFIC BRIEFING MATERIAL ON THIS SUBJECT LATER.) WE SHOULD IMPRESS UPON TOLBERT THE IMPORTANCE TO LIBERIA'S FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF A HEALTHY INVESTMENT CLIMATE, STRESSING THAT THE TREATMENT OF CURRENT INVESTORS IS A MAJOR CONSIDERATION OF ANY FIRM CONSIDERING NEW INVESTMENT. IN KEEPING WITH THE THEME OF THE SECRETARY'S PRESENTATION AT UNCTAD, WE SHOULD EMPHASIZE TO TOLBERT THAT WE SEE PRIVATE INVESTMENT AS THE KEY SOURCE OF CAPITAL AND TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER NEEDED TO DEVELOP LIBERIA'S RESOURCES, BOTH NATURAL AND HUMAN. WE CAN ASSURE HIM THAT THE USG WILL ACTIVELY WORK WITH THE GOL IN IDENTIFYING VIABLE PROJECTS AND ATTRACTING POTENTIAL INVESTORS TO THEM.

10. IN THIS REGARD, THE VISIT OFFERS AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO

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GENERATE RENEWED AMERICAN INTEREST IN INVESTMENT IN LIBERIA, AND, WHERE POSSIBLE, TO ADVANCE SPECIFIC PROJECTS CURRENTLY UNDER CONSIDERATION. WHILE I REALIZE THAT TIME IS SHORT AND MAJOR INVESTMENT PROJECTS REQUIRE CAREFUL (AND SOMETIMES LENGTHY) PLANNING, ANY AGREEMENTS THAT COULD BE REACHED (BY PRIVATE INVESTORS) AND ANNOUNCED DURING OR AFTER THE VISIT, WOULD HAVE THE SAME IMPACT AS THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF USG ASSISTANCE PROJECTS I HAVE DISCUSSED ABOVE. THIS WOULD ALSO PROVIDE THE GOL WITH THE KIND OF CONCRETE RESULTS THEY WOULD LIKE TO BRING BACK FROM THE VISIT. THE EMBASSY IS AWARE OF CERTAIN PROJECTS UNDER ACTIVE CONSIDERATION BY US FIRMS, AND IF WASHINGTON FEELS THAT THIS IS A LINE WE WISH TO PURSUE, THE EMBASSY WILL PROVIDE BACKGROUND AVAILABLE HERE AND OFFER SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS. THIS WOULD ALSO BE A GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW THE RESULTS OF LAST YEAR'S VISIT BY THE OPIC TEAM, AND RENEW OUR EFFORTS TO ATTRACT INVESTORS TO THOSE PROJECTS THE TEAM FOUND VIABLE.

11. IN ADDITION TO LEAVING HAL HORAN IN CHARGE OF OUR CORE GROUP, I HAVE ASSIGNED BLAINE PORTER (COMMERCIAL ATTACHE) AS ACTION OFFICER FOR THE VISIT AND CHARLES MAGEE (PAO) TO HANDLE ALL MEDIA RELATED ASPECTS. IN ADDITION, BECAUSE OF THE GOL'S KEEN INTEREST IN THAT AREA, I HAVE ASKED THE ACTING USAID DIRECTOR, HARVEY GUTMAN, TO SIT IN ON THE MEETINGS UNTIL STAN SIEGEL RETURNS. THE GROUP WILL CONTINUE TO MEET FREQUENTLY WITH THE GOL SIDE AND REPORT ALL DEVELOPMENTS.
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